



NIGHTBREED: THE STORIED STORY

THE HORROR


It all began with *Cabal*, Clive Barker's groundbreaking novel in which a man named Boone, framed by his psychiatrist and on the run from the police, seeks out a mythical place called Midian – a place where the monstrous and misunderstood can take refuge. While the road to Midian was found by Boone with relative ease, it would prove a far more difficult journey for its author to navigate.

Fresh from the success of his first film, *Hellraiser*, Clive chose *Cabal* as his sophomore directorial effort. The world waited with baited breath as the visionary mind behind the most original and iconic horror film of the late 80's positioned himself to blow its collective mind once again. What would the movie look like? How would it revolutionize the monster movie? Would we ever sleep again after watching it?

Hellraiser was a film, written by Clive, based on his novella, *The Hellbound Heart*. While Clive's adaptation of his own work stayed more faithful to its source material than not, there were elements in *Hellraiser* that were not present in the original story. These elements – most notably the realizations of Pinhead and his demonic band of brothers – are part and parcel with what helped make the film the longstanding success that it is. It stood to reason that *Cabal*, which was also to be adapted to the screen by its creator would deliver a similar promise.

Hellraiser took the fantasy film and turned it on its ear, introducing an entirely new language of themes and images that had never before been part of the genre, or even the medium. It was taboo. It was unthinkable. It was awesome. The only logical next step was for Clive to take another genre and work his magic. He did not disappoint. The script he wrote was a monster movie in which – dig this – the monsters were the good guys. It had never been done. But, as anyone who has spent more than five minutes in Hollywood can attest, the words “never been done” inspire more cries of terror in financiers than all the horror films watched by theatergoers in a given year.

And so, as is wont to happen, the executives and the artist found themselves at an impasse. Clive wanted to make a two-and-a-half hour romantic horror epic where the lawmakers were the bad guys, the monsters were the good guys, and – oh yeah – there was even a musical number thrown in for good measure. The executives, however, wanted something that sounded more commercial and easily marketable. And that's when the problems arose.





TROUBLE IN PARADISE

In 1989, the year *Nightbreed* was released, horror franchises were gangbusters. This is the same year that *A Nightmare on Elm Street 5*, *Friday the 13th Part VIII*, and *Halloween 5* were all set for theatrical release. In the midst of that formulaic fervor, a love story centered on a group of misunderstood, sympathetic monsters was a frightening proposition. As a result, Morgan Creek (the production company) asked for a different story; one with more focus on the villain of the piece – the knife-wielding, mask-wearing psychotic named Decker.

At first, Clive was asked to make changes to the script. Then he was asked to reshoot different sequences. And then, ultimately, he was asked to deliver a completely re-edited version of the film. With every request, Clive attempted to maintain some manner of grip on his original vision. But at every turn, the company that was paying for the film requested something other than that vision.

Plagued with a troubled shoot and even more tumultuous post-production, the film that was released theatrically was a 100-minute approximation of *Nightbreed* – a far cry from the nearly two-and-a-half hour original cut. The movie was released by a company that didn't understand it, and a director who had been forced to watch it become something he had never intended. It all too quickly disappeared from theaters, seen only by diehard Barker fans and perhaps the mildly curious.

The original materials were locked away and forgotten, and the world was left with a strange, half-realized vision about a psychotic psychiatrist chasing a terrorized couple through a cemetery in Canada.


Is Decker a bad-ass invention? You bet your buns. Is he the central force of the story? Not on your life. Nestled snugly within *Nightbreed's* evergreen message of not judging a book by its cover was the tragic and romantic tale of Boone and Lori. Make no mistake: this was their story; a romance for the ages. Not even death – or, worse, reshoots – could keep them apart.

WASTELANDS

The story stalls out here for a number of years. Released on VHS in 1990, *Nightbreed* sat on shelves and in studio vaults for 20 years. For 20 years, people talked of the missing footage and the hope of seeing the eventual director's cut. For 20 years, it remained only speculation.

And it only took 20 years of conjecture, searching, and hoping, but the original footage was finally found. During that time, the picture gained a cult following and, as it moved further from the





year of its theatrical release, it slowly accrued legendary status as one of the great lost studio films. Wherever there existed a forum for people to discuss “what might have been,” the people gathered and the whispered questions remained a constant.


Then, by some twist of fate, I entered Clive's life. In 2007, we became fast friends, and I realized, after spending much time with this fascinating and truly original mind, that I didn't know nearly as much about Clive as I wanted to. So I started doing my research, and that's when I discovered the previously mentioned on-set difficulties, the long-lost footage, and the whispers of an extended version of *Nightbreed*.

After reading about the film's troubles, and seeing many discussions on IMDB message boards about the theorized director's cut, I decided to go directly to the source. I sent Clive a text message, asking him if it was true. He confirmed that, indeed, many, many minutes of footage had gone missing (including that aforementioned musical number), but contrary to internet opinion, none of it had ever been recovered and there were, therefore, no foreseeable plans for a release of an extended version of the film.

Immediately, I offered my services in finding the film. Clive accepted and dubbed me the “official *Nightbreed* detective” – a title, I suppose, that still stands. Armed with only a few details about where the footage was last seen, and the names of the players involved at the time, I began my quest – cold-calling studios, production facilities, and anyone that I could get a hold of that had worked on the film. Oddly enough, after a conversation with the film's editor Mark Goldblatt, the trail led right back to Clive's office when, in 2009, I discovered a few heavily degraded VHS tapes that had been sitting on the shelves in Clive's storage closet.

I attempted to watch them, but aside from one tape which contained 45 minutes of a Canadian countryside highway (ostensibly that aforementioned road to Midian) the rest of the tapes were PAL encoded, so I sent them to our friends in the UK: Phil and Sarah Stokes, Clive's archivists and the creators of the obsessively maintained CliveBarker.info website.

We all waited eagerly for the tapes to arrive to hear the news of what they contained. When the tapes finally reached their destination, Phil and Sarah reported that they did, in fact, contain lost footage from the film! This was the first new *Nightbreed* footage seen by anyone in nearly 2 decades! Hot damn! When I began the journey, my sole intention was to help find the lost footage. I had done just that. Little did I know, it was only the beginning.





UNEARTHED

The tapes featured rough cuts and assemblies, all pieced together by Goldblatt, which contained scenes and plot points that never made it into the theatrical version of the film.

These scenes and plot points were all directly lifted from Clive's novella, *Cabal. Nightbreed*, the film, follows Boone and Lori, the two lovers who are swept up in the mad villainy of a deranged psychiatrist named Phillip Decker. In the book, however, Decker manages to convince Boone that he's having violent psychotic visions, and summarily writes Boone's force-fed confession into his session notes. During one of their sessions together, Decker drugs Boone with LSD and sends him on his merry way. While Boone is then busy tripping, Decker spends a nice quiet evening slaughtering a family in a manner identical to Boone's confessed visions, and then pins the crime on Boone.


Left with no choice but to flee, Boone heads to a mythical land called Midian, where, he's told, he'll find asylum. Midian, you see, is where the monsters live. Boone sets out to find this fabled land, and what ensues is an expansive romantic horror novel in which the monsters are the good guys, the lawmakers are the villains, and love is stronger than death.


All of these excised details, and even that musical number, were found on these tapes. Bear in mind, however, that these tapes were sitting on a shelf, collecting dust in a damp storage closet for nearly 20 years, so the quality of the footage was very rough but, like the film itself, the degraded material didn't stop fans from asking for it to be seen.

Phil and Sarah announced the finding of the footage on the web site, and almost immediately, Jessica Dwyer from *Horrorhound Magazine* came calling, asking if it would be possible to screen the footage. We had no idea how to answer that question. The film didn't belong to us. It was and remains the property of Morgan Creek. So we reached out to the production company once more, informing them of our discovery and the subsequent request. They kindly obliged and approved a screening of the material for *Horrorhound's* Indiana convention in March of 2010. Jessica interviewed me for that month's issue of the magazine. (It was *Nightbreed's* first cover story in a many years, but as fate would have it, it wouldn't be the last.)

Clive introduced the footage at the convention. I was in attendance and shared the stage with him, Doug Bradley (Lylesburg), and Simon Bamford (Omaka). I still have a hard time believing that it actually happened. Clive finished his introduction, the lights dimmed, and the footage screened to wildly mixed reviews.

Did I mention it was rough? This was by no means a proper edit of the film. This was a collection





of scenes, in basic order. Many sequences still had scenes missing. Most of the effects weren't even in place and, in their stead were graphics that read, "Effects here." For the die-hard fans, it was undoubtedly a thrill. For most other folks, it was a difficult watch, at best. The convention ended, everyone went home, and two years passed before anything else was to happen.

THE ROUGHEST CUT

In 2012, Eben McGarr of *Mad Monster Magazine* sent me an email asking "what ever happened to that *Nightbreed* footage?" He was putting together a convention in North Carolina (Mad Monster Party) and wanted to screen what we'd shown at *HorrorHound* way back in 2010. It seemed that fate had come calling. What Eben (and the rest of the world) didn't know was that the buzz on *Nightbreed's* found footage may have cooled, but our hands had not been idle. Clive's long-time friend, Russell Cherrington, had employed editor Jimmi Johnson for the task of reconstituting Clive's original vision using the initial script, the Warner Brothers DVD release of the theatrical cut, and the found VHS footage. Russell dubbed this expansive, nearly 155-minute cut of the film *The Cabal Cut*. And for good reason. It was a fully realized film version of Clive's novel. It was epic, romantic, and horrifying. It was *Cabal*.

Eben's email could not have come at a more perfect time. We were excited to re-introduce the world to this repurposed found footage. We again asked Morgan Creek for the rights to screen the footage. And again, they graciously agreed. So I informed Eben that we had something much more interesting available for him than what we screened at *HorrorHound*. Eben's excitement matched our own. We booked the screening and started making announcements. Word spread like wildfire.

The film screened at Mad Monster Party to a packed audience, which happened to include *Nightbreed's* stars Anne Bobby and Craig Sheffer. I had the pleasure of sitting next to the gobsnapped actors while the film played. Neither Anne nor Craig had ever seen the lost footage they'd shot. I sat enthralled, watching them watch their Midian selves for the first time in 25 years. Anne Bobby likened the experience to living in the same house all her life, only to find that her home had an extra room she'd never even known about.

The film ended, the credits rolled, and we (Anne Bobby, Craig Sheffer, Russell Cherrington and I) took our places on the stage for the Q&A. The crowd stood applauding for what seemed like minutes. It was unbelievable. The first question asked by the attendants of the screening was, "When can we own this?" Off the top of her head, Anne shouted "Let it be known that you want this film seen. Don't stop until you have it. We have to Occupy Midian!" And, like that, a movement was born.



GROUNDSWELL

The purchase of www.occupymidian.com was made that same day, and immediately the fans made their voices known. The petitioners lined up and held fast and, because of them, the film gained more and more traction. This time, the word of mouth on the film was purely positive, and we were soon receiving requests from festivals the world over to screen the long-thought-lost film. *The Cabal Cut* played everywhere from London to Beverly Hills. From New York to Australia. With those screenings came more notoriety. And with more notoriety came interviews and articles in magazines and newspapers: *Nightbreed* landed the cover of *Rue Morgue*; a huge spread was devoted to the film in *Empire Magazine*; And TotalFilm.com quickly named the extended cut the 14th greatest extended cut of all time! With each of these pieces of the puzzle, the names on the petition for a DVD release grew, until it became clear that there was indeed still an undeniable and substantial audience for *Nightbreed*.

We had a beast on our hands. *Nightbreed* was not simply some long-forgotten, misunderstood horror film. It was a force to be reckoned with.

With the revitalized shot in the arm that the property now had, the next step was obvious, and the question that everyone was asking was the same: Whence cometh the DVD? Clive wanted it. Morgan Creek wanted it. The fans wanted it. The only thing standing in the way was the matter of finding a distributor willing to invest the substantial sum of money that would be needed for this gargantuan undertaking. David Robinson and Michael Plumides of Morgan Creek reached out to a few distributors who were supporters of the genre. The folks who answered back with a resounding and enthusiastic yes were, obviously, Shout! Factory.

But, as is the case in Hollywood, it's never as simple as a "yes." Paperwork needed to be finalized and the deal needed to be cemented. Everyone involved wanted to announce the partnership and eventual release of the film at the movie announcement mecca that is San Diego Comic-Con. But the discussions lasted weeks and were still taking place by the time Comic-Con rolled around.

I was at the 2013 convention, meeting with a rising comic book company when I felt the familiar buzz of an incoming email emanating from my phone. I excused myself to check the message, and my jaw dropped as I read the words contained in the body of the email. The deal had been made. Morgan Creek and Shout! Factory had been working ceaselessly to finalize everything and at long last they had succeeded, but with only moments to spare. Shout! Factory's panel was set to begin...15 minutes from the time I received the email.





HOMECOMING

My presence was requested and I had to get from the hotel across the street to the west wing of the conference center in less than 15 minutes. As anyone who has braved the cosplaying crowds at Comic-Con knows, that is no small task.

I pushed my way past the teeming horde; the fundamentalist protestors; the men dressed as Princess Leia; the conventioners sleeping on the sidewalk in the hopes of being the first to catch a preview of next summer's hottest movie. While racing towards my destination, I began texting with Clive, telling him the news and what was about to take place. He was, needless to say, over the moon.

With seconds to spare, I made it to the hall where Shout! Factory was holding the panel. I introduced myself to Cliff MacMillan and Jeff Nelson and was told of their fantastic lineup of announcements but their desire to save *Nightbreed* as the very last. So we hatched a plan: they'd announce the release of the extended cut at the end of the panel and I'd emerge from the wings to deliver a personal message of thanks and excitement from Clive.

It was a homecoming, the likes of which have rarely happened in this industry. What began as a text message to my friend had traveled all the way around the globe and ended in a convention in San Diego four years later to frenzied excitement. *Nightbreed* would finally be seen by its indented audience. The announcement was met with shock and applause. I sent Clive the photos I took from onstage of the joyous crowd. We congratulated each other on the emotional and, to our disbelief, successful journey. At long last, the tale was done telling itself. We had reached Midian.


AT THE GATES


By the time of this second release, *Nightbreed* is nearly 25 years old. It was butchered, it bombed, and then it languished. But despite its troubles, it found an audience. It lived, it breathed, and then it re-emerged, transformed. And two decades after its ill-fated release, it screened to sold-out cinemas, film festivals, and conventions all over the globe. It received the kind of treatment that a lot of new films never even see. It became a worldwide phenomenon. It was pure magic.

The people had spoken.

They wanted this story told.

And so here it is.





The only thing left now to tell is what sets the film on this disc apart from the film that traveled the globe. *The Cabal Cut*, you see, was a stepping stone to get to where we are now.

We created it to get the attention of audiences and distributors alike. We created it to raise people's awareness of the film and hopefully get a proper release (which we have accomplished thanks to the good people at Occupy Midian, Morgan Creek, and of course, Shout! Factory).

But mostly, we created it because we wanted to see Clive's original vision ourselves. And as I said before, here it is. But now that we're here, we're taking the time to get it right. First and foremost, the movie on this disc is now professionally digitized, properly mixed, and lovingly restored. Second, every aspect of this restoration was overseen and approved by Clive himself. Finally (and arguably most importantly) while the missing footage from *The Cabal Cut* was comprised solely of the material we found on the VHS tapes in that storage closet, the movie you now hold in your hands contains new, never-before-seen restored film footage. We couldn't find everything. But damn it, nearly 25 years after *Nightbreed's* release – after being forgotten, disparaged, and summarily resurrected – our final victory came in the form of the discovery of some 500 dust-covered boxes tucked away in a Warner Brothers storage facility in the Middle of Nowhere, USA. In those boxes, we found some of the most beautiful lost footage you'll ever see.

It only took 25 years, but this is finally and ultimately Clive Barker's Director's Cut of *Nightbreed*. We hope you enjoy it.

May the tribes of the moon embrace you.

Mark Alan Miller
Vice President
Seraphim Films
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